

Message Text

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16

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20

DRC-01 OMB-01 /155 W

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O 081255Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0991

INFO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI U

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENGLAND

AMEMBASSY LONDON ENGLAND

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN SAUDI ARABIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0779

CINCUSNAVEUR FOR ADMS. BAGLEY AND HANKS

E.O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS : PINT, BA

SUBJECT : BAHRAIN'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

1. BAHRAIN'S FIRST ELECTION FOR A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WERE SUCCESSFULLY
CARRIED OUT DECEMBER 7. VOTING WAS SAID TO BE LIGHT, EVEN THOUGH DEAD-

LINE FOR VOTER REGISTRATION WAS EXTENDED SEVERAL TIMES - FINALLY UNTIL

DAY BEFORE ELECTION. THERE WERE NO DISTURBANCES, AND POLICE WERE ON
HAND ONLY TO SUPERVISE CONDUCT OF ELECTION.

2. POLITICAL PARTIES WERE NOT ALLOWED, AND ALL CANDIDATES STOOD
OSTENSIBLY AS INDEPENDENTS. RADICAL PEOPLES BLOC WAS ABLE TO OBTAIN
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8 OF 30 SEATS BY SHOWING CONSIDERABLE STRENGTH IN MUHARRAQ. ANOTHER 6

SEATS WENT TO LIBERAL, AND OFTEN ANTI-GOVT NATIONALIST BLOC. LARGE MERCHANT FAMILIES ARE NOT REPRESENTED BY FAMILY MEMBER, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE SAID TO CONTROL SOME MEMBERS. SEVEN OR EIGHT CONSERVATIVE, RELIGIOUS CANDIDATES WERE SUCCESSFUL. NOTABLY ABSENT AMONG WINNERS WAS IBRAHIM UL-URAYID, FORMER SPEAKER OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY WHOSE ELECTION HAD BEEN SOUGHT BY GOVT AND SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN VIRTUALLY GUARANTEED.

3. DEGREE OF SUCCESS OF RADICALS AND LIBERALS SHOULD COUNTER ANY CLAIMS THAT ELECTION WAS RIGGED IN ANY IMPORTANT RESPECT. THIS EARLY EXPERIMENT IN DEVELOPING DEMOCRATIC PROCESS SEEMS TO REFLECT DESIRE BY SIZEABLE PART OF ELECTORATE FOR GOVT TO DO BETTER ON BREAD AND BUTTER

ISSUES -- JOBS, PUBLIC SERVICES. PEOPLES BLOC CANDIDATES STRESSED SUCH

ISSUES, AND THERE IS SUFFICIENT CONFIDENCE IN BAHRAIN'S STABILITY FOR MANY CITIZENS TO APPROVE THEIR ELECTION SO THEY CAN SHOW WHAT THEY CAN DO AS RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES. IN MEANTIME GOVT, WHICH WILL HAVE MAJORITY IN ASSEMBLY (14 CABINET MINISTERS HAVE VOTE TOGETHER WITH 30 ELECTED MEMBERS), CAN BE EXPECTED TO KEEP A STRONG HAND IN RUNNING ASSEMBLY, ALTHOUGH CONTROL WILL NOW REQUIRE A RELATIVELY SOPHISTICATED

POLITICAL SENSE.
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